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DR. JOHN RAE'S ARCTIC EXPLORATIONS.

Editor the BULLETIN, American Geographical Society :

Dear Sir : You may have among your collection of English Admiralty charts one dated 1855, having the south shores of Wollaston and Victoria Lands drawn upon it, and also my discovery of Victoria Strait (in which Franklin's ships got ice-bound and were abandoned by their crews in 1848)—on a searching expedition, employed by H. M. Government—myself and my ten or twelve men being, however, of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s Service. I in 1851 searched closely, surveyed and mapped out about 750 miles of the coast above named, about 140 miles of which between longitude 105° and 110° W. had, however, been roughly traced by a previous expedition. The 600 odd miles of my survey—all new ground—were part of that, for which I was awarded in 1852 the Founder's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of England, in the Journal of which (1852), vol. 22, will be found the record of the award of the medal, the President Sir R. Murchison's speech when presenting it, and my Report and chart of the survey.

Now comes the strange part of the story. Captain Collinson, R. N., in H. M. S. *Enterprise*, had come through Behring Strait, also in search of Franklin, in 1851, and in 1852-53, by ship or sledge, passed along the same coast that I had surveyed a year before, but did not get back to England until late in 1854.

On the 29th of December of that year, I received a letter from Admiral Beaufort—then about to resign his position as Hydrographer of the Admiralty to Captain Washington, R. N.,—of which the following is an accurate copy :

ADMIRALTY, December 29, 1854.

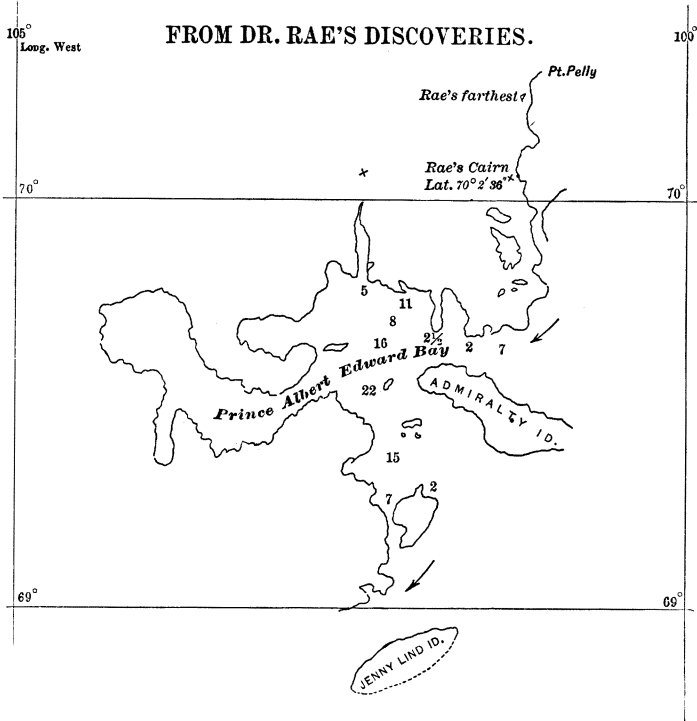
Dear Dr. Rae: I am endeavoring to put into our Arctic chart Captain Collinson's track, and, as far as Cambridge Bay and the Jenny Lind Island (Collinson made Jenny Lind Island part of Victoria Land, although some miles from that shore, with a deep ship channel between. *J. R.*) of your drawing, we get on pretty well by taking his points, and adopting your more minute detail of the shore. But from your Jenny Lind Island up to your Pelly Point, in Latitude $70^{\circ} 20' N.$, I can in no way possible reconcile the apparent configuration of the coast in the two tracings, as you will perceive by the enclosed copies. His Driftwood Point, I suppose to be the eastern end of your Admiralty Island (Yes. *J. R.*), but I know not where to find your broad opening into Albert Edward Bay—can you put me on any scent likely to solve my difficulties?

Yours very truly,

(Signed) F. BEAUFORT.*

I enclose a correct copy of the above named tracings. The Bay referred to, which I surveyed and sounded in my boats, has a coast line of about 200 miles, which Collinson passed and repassed without seeing it! A very short time after this, in January, 1855, a chart of

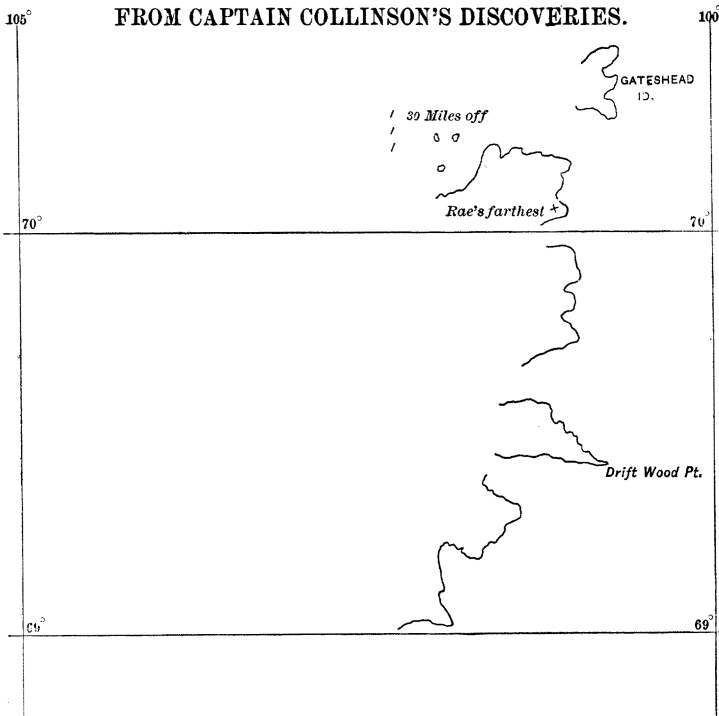
* The only reply given to this note by me, was that Collinson had evidently travelled over the ice far out from the land—although searching for Franklin,—and had not seen the large Bay with 200 miles of Coast. J. RAE.



Note by Dr. Rae.—Two of my men went eight or ten miles beyond this point. The land being a dead flat, I saw them with telescope from an ice hummock at least five or six miles out.—J. R.

this coast was sent me by Captain Washington, then Hydrographer, with the following note inserted :

“From Cape Back round this Peninsula to Gates-head Island (my Point Pelly) the outer line of the coast has been determined by Captain Collinson, and the lakes and inner bays (The bay having a coast line of 200 miles being one of these inner bays. *J. R.*) adapted from Dr. Rae.”



Note by Dr. Rae.—My discoveries are cut down to the point where I took my latitude with sextant, $70^{\circ} 2' 36''$, whereas two of my men, active young fellows, walked at least eight or ten miles farther. The shore being flat as a table, I saw them with my glass five or six miles on their way, I being on an ice-heap fifteen feet high.

Collinson is allowed to put down land seen thirty miles off.—J. R.

For an obvious purpose no dates are given.

When I tell you that nearly the whole of Captain Collinson's chart was exchanged for mine, and errors in one part of even 10 miles of Latitude were corrected, and a chain of islands, 18 miles in extent, of *my survey* with a deep channel inside, made to replace an equal extent of coast of Victoria Land, as Collinson's drawing

had it, you may suppose that the arrangement of actually handing over my prior and correct survey (I say *correct*, otherwise it would not have been adopted by the Hydrographer,) to Captain Collinson was not agreeable to me.

Next morning I went, chart in hand, to the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty, and asked Captain Washington the meaning of the note given above. I found the Captain in a very high and mighty humor, quite quarter-deck fashion, as when speaking to a subordinate, I suppose, when I remonstrated on the injustice done me, winding up with "*No change or alteration can be made.*" It was now my turn, and I had my remedy handy, and said: "Captain Washington, if you have not that objectionable note removed in a week—I give you a week to think it over—the whole disgraceful proceeding shall be published in the *Times* (of which paper my friend Mr. Delane was then Editor). The Captain looked aghast, and remarked: "Would you *dare* do that to the Admiralty?" It was, perhaps, not good manners, but I fairly laughed in his face, saying at the same time, that I had been four years in the service of the Admiralty, and, setting aside the Hydrographic officials, had always found them civil, courteous and *even* kind, but did not fear them. Repeating my threat, I took my leave. Within four days of the above little conversation a copy of the Chart was sent me, with the aforesaid *Note* covered over with thick cartridge paper, and a letter telling me that the same would be done with all the *copies* on hand, and that the note would be omitted in the next edition.

The next edition soon appeared (that is, in the same

year), and the note above referred to was left out, having had, as far as I knew, a short life of 5 or 6 days. The Hydrographer, feeling probably a little sore and uncomfortable at being frustrated by a mere civilian, inserted another note, as follows :

“The coast from Cape Back to Gateshead Island was discovered by Dease and Simpson (a Hudson's Bay Company's Expedition) in 1839, by Dr. Rae in 1851, and was passed and re-passed in 1851-52-53 by H. M. S. *Enterprise*, Captain Collinson.”

Now, every sentence of the above note, with the exception of the five words referring to myself, is untrue, and, unless we can suppose extreme stupidity and ignorance—*wilfully* so.

FALSEHOOD NO. 1.—Dease and Simpson, indeed, saw and traced roughly about one hundred and forty miles of this coast ; the remaining part (more than 600 miles) *was my work*, and, as I have already said, part of my discoveries, for which was awarded me the Founder's Gold Medal in 1852. Besides this, I corrected Dease and Simpson's survey in some important points, where they had not approached the land near enough with their boats to see clearly the outline of the coast.

FALSEHOOD NO. 2.—Neither Captain Collinson, nor his ship the *Enterprise*, was *ever* nearer to any part of the coast named than seventy or eighty miles, in 1851.

FALSEHOOD NO. 3.—The *Enterprise* never in 1852-53 passed and repassed from Cape Back to Gateshead Island. The ship got about half way, as far as Cambridge Bay, where she wintered, Captain Collinson going on to Gateshead Island with a sledging party in the spring, 1853.

The above facts seem almost incredible, but the notes—both entered one after the other in the same *chart* in the same *year*—speak for themselves. Probably you have one or other (perhaps both) of these muddled charts in your Hydrographic offices—the first note being still patched over. This false note (the second one) has had something like thirty-six years of an inning—rather an appropriate sporting word for the occasion,—and perhaps you may, in kindness and fairness of spirit, be inclined to aid in restoring to their proper owner the six hundred miles of survey, of which I have for such a very long period been dishonestly dispossessed.

After writing the above, I called at the Admiralty, and saw the present Hydrographer, Captain Wharton, R. N., who was most courteous and painstaking in looking over the documents I had brought with me to explain my rights. He freely acknowledged them, and said he would rectify the injury that had been done, as far as was in his power.

I may further state that it was only about ten days ago, that I found out that the last note mentioned, giving Dease and Simpson credit for the whole survey, was still inscribed on the Admiralty charts, that are on sale at the present time. My belief was, that on its being pointed out that the note was false, as I *did*, the note had been long ago erased or covered up.

Those who care to do so, especially naval officers, might probably be permitted to see Captain Collinson's original tracing at the Admiralty, or a copy of it at Messrs. Stanford's, Cockspur Street. Let them then compare this with the actual outer line of the coast by me, said in the first note to be Captain Collinson's, and

any one, at all conversant with cartography, will at once see what a miserable fiction the whole affair has been.

I beg to subscribe myself

Your obedient servant,

JOHN RAE.

4 Addison Gardens, Kensington,
London, W.

May, 1891.